

REMARKS

Claims 1-11 remain pending. Claims 1, 5, and 9 are currently amended. No claims are canceled or added.

Claims 1-11 stand rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as obvious over Shimura (U.S. Patent No. 5,758,041) in view of Hansen et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,442,144), and further in view of Hatae et al. (U.S. Patent No. 6,332,159). Applicant respectfully submits that, in view of the reasons below, the rejection should be withdrawn.

Shimura discloses an output control method and apparatus for preventing illegal copying of data sent from a host computer to a printer. (Note column 1, lines 13-44.) The method and apparatus may be embodied in the system shown in Fig 1. When the host is preparing to send data to the printer for printing, the host computer sends identification (ID) information to the printer, and the printer compares the ID information with an ID previously stored therein. If the two IDs match, printing of the data is enabled. (See, for example, the Abstract.)

To configure the system of Fig. 1, a "registration" process begins by a reading ID information from a supply medium such as a floppy disk.¹ The ID information is sent to hard disc 11 of the printer. If the supply medium was not already used for the registration, an ID number is displayed on the printer's operation panel 8 (Figs. 1 and 2), and an operator enters the ID number into host computer 12. (See column 3, lines 42-67, and Fig 4.)

Shimura differs significantly from applicant's invention. Note, for example, applicant's specification, page 6, lines 19-23, which teaches that assigning an identifier in management equipment enables a user to assign identification information different from the identification

¹ Although not stated explicitly, the supply medium is presumably read by host computer 12, because printers without floppy disk drives are so commonplace, and, if printers with floppy disk drives do exist, applicant understands that they are much less commonplace. Also, applicant finds no disclosure that the printer discussed in Shimura has a floppy disk drive.

information used in the network. Thus, an identifier, which is easy to understand, can be assigned. As shown above, independent claims 1, 5, and 9 are now amended to emphasize this feature of the invention. Each of the remaining claims depends from one of 1, 5, and 9, so by virtue of their dependency those claims also emphasize this feature.

Shimura does not teach or suggest this feature. Although Shimura discloses sending ID information from a supply medium, such as a floppy disk, memory card, or CDROM (column 4, lines 25-27), Shimura does not disclose the option of changing that ID information to a format tailored especially to the intended environment of the host computer 12/printer system, such as "Pr-1" to "Pr-5," chosen for the exemplary system in applicant's Fig. 1. Regarding Hansen et al. or Hatae et al., applicant finds no suggestion in either reference to modify the Shimura method and apparatus to include the option of changing ID information.

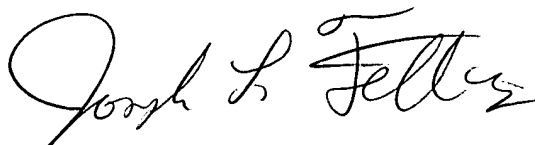
Regarding a different modification (now rendered moot), the Office Action states on page 3 in the final sentence that Hansen et al. suggests that a modification would have been beneficial. However, to justify an obviousness rejection, it is insufficient only to explain that a modification would have been beneficial. A prior art teaching or suggestion must be provided to show that someone actually thought of that benefit beforehand instead of merely appreciating, after learning of the modification, that it would have been beneficial. With respect to applicant's present claims, it would be insufficient to justify an obviousness rejection based on Shimura as the primary reference by only stating that the modified method and apparatus would have an additional benefit. A prior art teaching or suggestion must also be provided showing that someone actually thought of that benefit.

Accordingly, Shimura, Hansen et al., and Hatae et al., alone or combined, cannot render the pending claims unpatentable. Therefore, withdrawal of the obviousness rejection is now requested.

In view of the remarks above, applicant now submits that the application is in condition for allowance. Accordingly, a Notice of Allowability is hereby requested. If for any reason it is believed that this application is not now in condition for allowance, the Examiner is invited to contact applicant's undersigned attorney at the telephone number indicated below to arrange for disposition of this case.

In the event that this paper is not timely filed, applicant petitions for an appropriate extension of time. The fees for such an extension, or any other fees which may be due, may be charged to Deposit Account No. 50-2866.

Respectfully submitted,
WESTERMAN, HATTORI, DANIELS & ADRIAN, LLP



Joseph L. Felber
Attorney for Applicant
Reg. No. 48,109

1250 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., Suite 700
Washington, DC 20036
Tel: (202) 822-1100
Fax: (202) 822-1111

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